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ABSTRACT

The educational development programs of Latin American nations have frequently floundered because of an inability to plan, organize, and execute decisions effectively and to deliver resources with precision and dispatch. This study documents and analyzes Colombia's effort to resolve this problem in its educational institution through the process of organizational and administrative reform. Within the administrative process, the central concept under observation is decisionmaking in the Ministry of Education. An onsite, field research methodology was used to gather data in 1965, 1969, and 1973. Working within the context of organizational theory, the study is reported in three stages: the pre-reform era, in which a condition of administrative "semi-anarchy" in the separate States prohibited the Ministry from developing a more effective use of human and material resources; a reform plan, designed to bring the States under closer federal control; and a current reform program suggestion -- a transitional device that will probably evolve through planning into a more effective mechanism of educational development. (Author/DN)

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REFORM AND GOVERNANCE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

THE CASE OF COLOMBIA

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REFORM AND GOVERNANCE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: THE CASE OF COLOMBIA

For generations Latin American nations have been struggling toward national development, in each case at differing speeds with differing motivations and economic formulas. The experience of all modernizing nations has been that it is no simple task to forge the economic, political, social and educational processes into a forceful infrastructure which can accelerate the rate of development.

At the focal point of the infrastructure which drives the complex development machinery of a nation is the administrative process; a process which ought to be continually adapted to the steady changes in national needs. All too often, however, Latin American nations have paid scant attention to their administrative processes and as a result their development programs have frequently floundered because of an inability to plan, organize and execute decisions effectively as well as deliver resources with precision and dispatch. Colombia has historically been one of these nations, and this study is an attempt to document and analyze that nation's effort to resolve this problem in its educational institution through the process of organizational and administrative

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reform. Within the administrative process the central concept under observation will be decision-making in the Ministry of Education.

Working within the context of organizational theory, the study will be reported in three stages. The first reports on the pre-reform era in which a condition of administrative "semi-anarchy" (as it was frequently described) in the separate states prohibited the Ministry from developing a more effective use of human and material resources. The second stage compares the reform plan with the realities of the reform four years after initiation, along with an explanation of the principle phenomenon which created the differences. Lastly, the writer will speculate on how the reform might continue developing in the future.

An on site, field research methodology was used to gather data in the years 1965, 1969 and 1973. Interviews were conducted throughout the Ministry of Education as well as in many of the individual states of the nation. Also, numerous libraries and files were opened to the researcher. As in all field studies, organizational patterns of activity were sought out and isolated esoteric incidencs were not incorporated into the findings. It seems appropriate to begin this paper with a statement of the educational problem Colombia is facing during the decade of the 1970s.

The Challenge to Educational Change

The educational system in Colombia today ". . .is shifting from the still predominant classic, elitist oriented, sharply peaking educational pyramid, toward a broader, technically oriented system more responsive to the development needs of the country and to the civic, economic, and

social needs of its citizens."[1] During the decade of the 1960s, the growth rate in the educational sector increased dramatically, placing great stress on the system as it tried to meet the social demand for education. From 1960 to 1968 the primary school enrollment increased approximately 60 percent (from 1.7 to 2.7 million), secondary enrollment increased approximately 136 percent (from 250 to 590 thousand), and higher education enrollment increased approximately 200 percent (from 23 to 68 thousand).[2]

The educational problem had many front lines which had to be engaged simultaneously, and one of them was illiteracy. The last literacy census in 1964 placed the illiteracy rate, from the age of fifteen and above, at 27.1 percent.[3] The qualitative and quantitative productivity of the educational system also needed upgrading. In 1970 the Minister of Education reported that of every 1000 children of elementary age only 770 manage to enroll, and of that figure 216 will graduate from primary school, 37 will graduate from secondary school, and 11 will graduate from the university.[4]

The challenge to the national leadership charged with planning for the decade of the 1970s was clear. If the pace of socio-economic development were to be increased, the educational system would have to be reformed, and a central part of any such reform would have to modify its problem-ridden organizational and administrative infrastructure.

The next section will present a conceptual frame work within which the paper will examine specific administrative processes of the educational system.

The Ministry as a Complex Organization

A society is made up of numerous social mechanisms called organizations which are designed to bring human and material resources to bear on ongoing problems. Talcott Parsons, one of the leading social thinkers of our time, conceives of an organization as a social system composed of various subsystems (e.g. branches, groups) embedded within a wider social system such as a community or a nation. The idea of a system within a system is central to his thinking.[5] The public educational system to be observed in this study is made up of the Ministry of Education and the 23 subsystems which consist of the 22 state educational systems and the Federal District of Bogota. As an organizational design, this system is not unlike a corporate structure with the head office in one city and branches spread throughout the country.

An organization cannot, of course, be made up of a random collection of human behaviors. In the human collectivity that makes up an organization, there must be a set of structures and processes which give it purpose and direction. Amitai Etzioni defines the special characteristics that make up an organization as: a division of labor, the presence of one or more power centers which controls the concerted efforts of the organization, and a process to provide for the substitution of unsatisfactory personnel.[6] Richard Scott adds the need for ". . .a normative order, authority ranks, a communication system, and an incentive system which enables various types of participants to work together in the pursuit of common goals."[7]

A key element which ties together most of the characteristics listed

is the concept of organizational control. Organizational control is a necessary ingredient in structuring the behavior of members toward what Chester Barnard has referred to as effectiveness. That is, the attainment of the formal objectives of the organization.[8] In structuring the behavior of others it is necessary that the organization, as Herbert Simon says, ". . .takes from the individual some of his decisional autonomy, and substitutes for it an organization decision-making process."[9]

Decisions can usually be classified as to type, and different types of decisions are usually made at specific levels of the hierarchy. Policy and procedural decisions, for example, are usually made at the top of the hierarchy because they establish objectives and select procedures for achieving those objectives. Executive decisions are usually made at the middle levels and routine administrative decisions at the lower levels of the hierarchy.[10] In the final analysis, as Daniel Griffiths points out, "The specific function of administration is to develop and regulate the decision-making process in the most effective manner possible."[11]

Even though the decision-making process is of primary importance to this research, other organizational variables brought out in the conceptual framework will be evident because of their essential role toward achieving organizational effectiveness. They are: (a) power and authority, (b) communication processes, (c) personnel processes, (d) normative order (governing regulations), and (e) incentive systems (rewards and negative sanctions).

The next section of this paper examines the organizational and administrative problems that necessarily had to be resolved if the nation was to meet successfully the educational challenges it faced for the 1970s.

The Pre-reform Decisional Problem[12]

The Colombian Constitution establishes a federal system of government and provides for an educational organization to parallel this form through the existence of national, state, municipal, and private school systems. The President appoints a Minister of Education and delegates to him the authority to establish educational policy covering all the school systems in the country.

Ideally, the national, state, municipal and private schools will act in concert pursuant of the Ministry policies, and thus project the totality of the educational effort directly toward the development goals of the nation. Unfortunately, this has rarely proven to be the case and an excessive, and frequently illegitimate, decentralization of decision-making crept into the educational organization and, as Yvon Lebot points out, served as ". . .the root of its disorganization."[13] Basically, two factors contributed to this decentralized condition: the first was a Constitutional separation of powers between the Ministry and the state governments, as well as the private school systems; and the second was the pattern of student enrollments.

State School Governance

As a governing body, each state has a popularly elected assembly, however, the governor is appointed by the President of the Republic. The Constitution establishes the governor as the chief administrative officer of the state, thus giving him control of the administration of all state schools in his sector.[14] The governor of each state appoints a secretary of education who is the state's chief educational officer.

The secretary of education is responsible to the governor and the state assembly and not to the Minister of Education. This structural feature was at the crux of the pre-reform decisional problems in Colombia because, ". . .the degree of administrative autonomy that each secretariat had in relation to the Minister of Education was almost total."[15] As Figure 1 illustrates, there was a clean break in the organizational hierarchy between the Minister of Education at the national level and the governing officials at the state level.

Figure 1 about here

Although theoretically bound by the guidelines of Ministry policy, the executive decision-making authority reserved to the states was considerable. For example, the secretary of education would prepare the budget, purchase materials, supervise instructional programs, conduct in-service training programs, and hire, fire, promote and transfer personnel.

The only schools the Ministry directly controls are the national schools. The last educational census reported that only 1 percent of the primary and 6.5 percent of the secondary school students were enrolled in national schools.[16] These data point out that the administration of primary and secondary education prior to the 1968 reform tended to reside in the hands of state and private school officials and outside the direct control of the Ministry of Education.

Tools of Control

As stated previously, the Ministry of Education dictated policy and the individual states and private schools executed policy. Action-

oriented decisions (as distinguished from policy decisions) were made at the state level, and the Ministry had limited legal authority as well as manpower to intervene. The Constitution did, however, provide a mechanism intended to bridge the gap between the Ministry and the state and private school systems.

The Constitution says that the nation has ". . .supreme inspection and vigilance of teaching institutions, both private and public. . ."[17] A corps of inspectors exist which theoretically have the responsibility of transmitting the rules and regulations of the Ministry, providing guidance and supervision services, and reporting on irregular practices discovered in the various school systems. These inspectors, however, work almost exclusively at the task of individual school accreditation and do not involve themselves in state decision-making processes.[18]

The Minister of Education (and his immediate subordinates) tended to be the primary instrument of control. The extent of his control, however, was based on informal pressures he could bring to bear on obstinate governors and secretaries of education because he had very limited powers of command. If a governor was clearly stepping beyond acceptable limits and the Minister was unable to convince him of the error of his ways, as a last recourse the issue could be called to the attention of the President. This approach, however, places the only direct line of control at the level of a "last recourse."

Consequences of a Frail Control Structure

Since 1961, the national government has been contributing to the state budgets an ever increasing proportion of the funds necessary to pay the primary school teachers (which represents by far the largest

budgeted item in education). By 1973 approximately 60 percent of these salaries were being paid by national monies, 25 percent by state and municipal funds, and the rest by other agencies.[19]

Prior to the 1968 reform, however, even though the Ministry of Education specifically earmarked its contribution for the salaries of teachers in state schools, once the money entered the accounts of the state treasury the Minister would lose control of the funds to the state governor. One former Minister of Education spoke of the impotence of his office in ensuring the correct usage of this money.

> When we sent funds to the state treasuries, we had no way to control or supervise these funds to ensure they were used correctly, for instance, to appoint teachers by merit and with proper credentials. These funds of the nation would often get confused with funds of the state governments and would be used in any given state for purposes other than education. In numerous states I saw cases where the use of the national education funds were abused, such as hiring teachers that really didn't work in the schools but in offices of the state government.

Also, money earmarked for education was often used for building roads or constructing buildings rather than paying teachers' salaries. Many observers pointed out a particularly notorious personnel practice that traditionally would develop around election time in numerous states. Scores of teachers would be hired for the political rather than the educational returns they could generate.

As might be guessed, many state educational systems often had difficulty meeting their monthly payrolls and on various occasions the teachers would have to wait up to six or more months to receive their pay. During the last decade, the FEDCODE (Colombian Federation of Educators) unions conducted approximately 80 strikes, the majority of which were motivated to obtain unpaid salaries.

Perhaps one of the most visible violations of Ministry policy came with the state hiring of teachers who did not meet the Ministry's established minimum qualifications. In 1968, approximately 23 percent of the public primary school teachers did not meet the minimum standards established by the Ministry, and approximately 70 percent of this number taught in rural schools.[20] Also, it was not at all uncommon for the state governments to hire teachers when no money had been budgeted to pay them.

Clearly, the nation had to find a way to cast a strong bridge across the administrative ravine separating the Ministry from the state school systems. The educational reform of 1968 attacked the state school problem in an extremely clever and intriguing fashion through the creation of a program called (FER) Fondos Educativos Regionales (Regional Educational Funds).

The FER Program

In December of 1968, the President of Colombia signed the now famous Decree 3157 which began a many faceted attack on the educational problems of the nation.[21] One facet was a reorganization of the Ministry, which brought forth a clear statement reinforcing its historic decision-making role. "The Ministry will have the role of formulating educational policy, coordinating its execution at the national level, supervising the operation of other organizations in the educational sector (state, municipal, and private), and serving as financing coordinator."[22]

It is the writer's opinion that the FER program was designed to put "enforcement teeth" into this historic mission. In its creation, however, the program had to be developed in a delicate and tactful way so as to

violate neither Constitutional "states rights" nor create a political storm. In other words, a way had to be found which would induce the state governments to give up their autonomy voluntarily.

Although it was not stated as such, the key to the FER program was the national money which year after year had been sent to the individual states to help finance state education. Under the FER program each governor was asked to sign a contract with the nation which contained numerous constraining clauses. The governors were not required to sign the contract; however, underlying the offer was the understanding that if any state did not sign, it would not receive any more national money to support state education. That loss would have resulted in financial disaster to most of the state governments. All 22 governors and the Federal District representative signed contracts. The private schools were not included in the FER program, therefore they will not be included in this study.

In signing the contracts with the Ministry, the states agreed to adhere to many constraining clauses, most of which had been previous Ministry policy.

Among other things, the contracts required each state to:[23]

1. increase annually state appropriations for education consistent with the growth of the total state budget,
2. hire only teachers who meet the qualification standards established by the Ministry, and select them by special examination,
3. replace all non-qualified teachers (primary and secondary) within a period of two years,
4. create positions for supervisors at the ratio of 1 for every 200 teachers,

5. reorganize the state offices of education to agree with recommendations of the Ministry,

6. manage the wage-scale and personnel promotions consistent with Ministry policy and national law,

7. permit the Ministry to supervise the state budgetary expenditures in education,

8. demonstrate the availability of funds before hiring additional teachers,

9. accept the presence of a Ministry official (a delegado) who is authorized to supervise all matters mentioned in the contract as well as investigate irregularities found in other segments of the state educational systems.

"There was almost nothing in the contract regarding the Ministry's obligations to the states that it hadn't already been doing," a former Minister said in an interview. In other words, the agreements came at little cost to the Ministry, however, in one swift stroke the individual states had apparently voluntarily surrendered their decision-making autonomy as well as opened the door for the first time for the Ministry to supervise the administrative processes of the state secretariats of education.

The contract requires each state (and the Federal District) to establish a special bank account to receive the monthly state and national contributions to education. This fund is to be managed by the state treasurer, but managed separately from the general budget of the state. To date, such funds have never been established for secondary schools; only primary schools have entered into the procedure.[24] The contract states that the Ministry will appoint a delegado (delegate) ". . .who will have as a principle function to watch over each and every operation affecting the fund, and especially to intervene in the accounting."

At the end of the contracts is a statement saying, in effect, that if for any reason a state cannot meet its monthly contribution to the fund, or violates any of the clauses, the national contribution to the fund would cease immediately and any unexpended money would have to be returned. This clause, of course, poses a sanction which, if invoked, would cause severe economic repercussions in any state in the nation. It is the only negative sanction present in the contract and represents an ultimate recourse in the case of non-compliance.

Organizational Theory and the FER Program

Earlier in this paper it was noted that various organizational ingredients necessary for the existence of an effective system were noticeably missing in the pre-reform educational system in Colombia. Through the creation and signing of the contracts, many of the badly arranged or missing pieces fell into place. For example, the contract: (a) provided for a single major power center in the Ministry by constraining the decisional discretion previously enjoyed by the states; (b) established an incentive system which stipulated how the states could receive funding and services from the Ministry as well as the conditions under which these benefits could be lost; (c) dictated a personnel pattern upgrading the process of supervision, hiring, and promotion; (d) created a precise communication pattern through the delegados who were physically stationed in the offices of the secretariats of education; and (e) established the precedent of continued appraisal and reform of the state secretariats of education. The Ministry officials insist on calling the FER program a decentralization process because, they argue, the presence of a delegado making decisions in each state means decisions are regionalized. In re-

ality, the FER program is a process of centralization of decision-making because the Ministry, acting through the delegado, now makes decisions that used to be made exclusively by state officials.

In short, the contract provided the mechanism to turn the public educational system from a collection of loosely knit, relatively independent educational subsystems into a coordinated network in pursuit of a single body of policy. However, as later sections of this paper will illustrate, providing such mechanisms on paper and enforcing them in practice are two distinct tasks. A reform is not carried out solely by drafting rules, signing contracts or giving orders. It must be carried out in the minds, actions and motivations of the participants if it is to have any real chance of success. The next section of this paper will examine the reform as it developed in practice.

The Reform in Practice

The Colombian experience with the FER program in its few short years of existence has witnessed numerous battles in individual states, and the result across the nation can be seen as a patchwork of successes and failures.

Specifying the number of states where the FER program is functioning satisfactorily is subject to educated speculation, not only because the figure can change from moment to moment, but because varying standards of evaluation are applied by different commentators on the subject. However, the best approximation the writer was able to arrive at suggests that by January of 1973 of the 23 programs, at least 8 were functioning well and collaborating with FER, 5 were functioning well and not collaborating, and 10 were not collaborating and in various stages of disorgan-

ization.[25] An event took place in January of 1973 which may soon change these figures, but this incident will be taken up later. This section of the paper will, therefore, discuss the FER experience from its inception to 1973.

To understand the forces and counterforces at work in the reform, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of the roles of the principle combatants, notably, the state secretariats of education, the Ministry's representatives in the states (the delegados), and the central figures in the Ministry itself.

The State Secretariat of Education

Most secretaries of education (and the governors they represent) think of the FER program as an insult to their integrity if not their intelligence. Afterall, they argue, it was placed on them as a means of controlling their actions and they don't need or want such control. Unfortunately, the history of Colombian education has proven this not to be so in many cases. Two years after the FER program began, one study reported:

> Many of the Secretariats of Education are inoperative because of their bad organization. In some cases one encounters an official around whom revolves all the activities of the institution, and when he is absent everything is paralyzed. Some employees don't have defined functions and others are found moving from job to job without responsibilities of any nature. In brief, the problems and disorganization that can be encountered in the secretariats' offices are innumerable.[26]

Irregular practices have tended to crop up in most states from time to time, but in some these practices seemed to be normal operating procedures. Two years after the FER program began a report came out on the operations of one secretariat's office which possibly set a new standard of inefficiency. In the report it became clear that the state had

violated the clauses of the contract in virtually every conceivable way.[27]

1. Of the 2,100 primary school teachers in the state, 1,131 do not meet minimum standards.

2. In March of 1970, 420 new teachers were appointed for political reasons without having funds in the budget to pay them.

3. It is not possible to remove the unqualified teachers because the political pressures over the secretary of education won't permit it.

4. The state uses educational funds for other purposes.

5. The delegado is not permitted to approve expenditures from the FER fund.

5. When the principal of a school is changed, everyone down to the janitors are changed.

The FER program often seemed incapable of coping with practices such as those listed above. An internal Ministry memo in 1970 stated, the state officials ". . .give complete promises regarding compliance with the contracts, but they carry out a different policy altogether."

In terms of organizational structure, the lack of response can be attributed partially to the fact that the secretary of education is responsible to the governor of his state and not the Minister of Education. But the problem goes much deeper than that. Basically, the role of secretary of education is a political position with political priorities as well as an educational position with educational priorities.

The secretaries of education in Colombia, a university professor of educational administration pointed out, are usually medical doctors, lawyers, or business men who see this position as an important stepping stone which can launch them on a political career. It would be difficult to say that they accept the post because of any special sense of personal

calling to the field of education. The post is considered a desirable political base because of the typically large budget that is managed by the secretariat's office--frequently the largest single amount of public money in the state. It is also desirable because many hundreds of teaching jobs are controlled in each state by this office.

With regards to the selection process of secretaries of education, a Ministry official replied:

> A governor does not have a free selection of his secretary of education. The political leadership of both political parties present their candidates for the position and the governor makes his choice. Educators cannot perform the political activities which are necessary to get their names on the waiting list for an appointment, therefore they can never become secretaries of education.

Thus, an incentive system built into the educational organization at the state level has a tendency to be oriented toward providing rewards through the political system rather than the educational system.

In some senses, then, the educational system is an extension of the political system, and nowhere is this more evident than in the selection of teachers. For example, a delegado pointed out why his state officials frequently hire teachers who do not meet the minimum standards. "Because these teachers bring votes and graduates from normal schools don't," he said. "They are picked through the recommendation of the politicians and through them the politicians get votes." It should also be pointed out that many unqualified individuals are selected because teachers with degrees often are not willing to teach in rural areas.

Also, certain leadership characteristics of the Colombian professional are forced to the surface from time to time because of the imposition of the FER program. Richard Renner writes of these leadership character-

istics saying:

> The leader of an organization is usually expected to determine most of its policies, frequently without even consulting his closest supporters. Followers tend to judge their leader by the power he wields and place a premium upon his ability to outmaneuver rival groups. His personal reputation and strength of character also contribute to his effectiveness as a leader.[28]

This trait of individualism has shown up time and again in the FER program and has resulted in many serious clashes between the governor or his secretary of education and the delegado. A secretary of education reported on one such incident involving the governor of his state. "An earlier delegado we had here tried to nullify some of the teacher appointments the governor had made, and the governor got mad. He put the delegado on the first plane for Bogota, and formally revoked the contract through an irate letter to the Minister." Although this governor formally revoked the contract, other governors as a result of similar clashes chose simply to ignore the contract. It is important to note that in this case, and many others as well, the delegado was only performing his duty in accordance with the requirements of the contract.

Another factor significantly affecting the functioning of the secretariats of education is the high rate of turnover in the position. One reason for this is that occupants of the post are not career educators and their motivation toward the job is limited. Also, even though the secretariat is a full time job, the occupants usually continue on the side with their regular professions. (The writer had at least one interview interrupted because the secretary of education had to go to the hospital to operate.) This feature makes it very easy for any secretary to resign at a moments notice.

Also, by tradition (and political necessity) an appointment to the secretariat must be made to someone who is a resident of that state. This peculiarity means that talented and experienced administrators cannot be moved across state boundaries to fill posts in great need of such qualified individuals.

Finally, due to the intense political pressures, the high rate of turnover, and the general lack of administrative training, the secretariats usually do not need any more cause for inefficiency than they can generate for themselves. However, the nation adds to the problem by the way it promulgates educational law and policy. The governing educational code is cumulative with contributions being made by the President, Congress, the Minister of the Treasury, the Director General, Vice Minister and Minister of Education, as well as all 22 governors, and 22 secretaries of education. Thus, because of the complexity and dispersion of the educational policy, coupled with the high turnover rate, it is not difficult to understand why many secretaries do not develop an operational knowledge of how the educational system should work. Many of these posts, therefore, are in a continual state of trying to get organized.

The Delegado

The first wave of 23 delegados assumed their posts early in 1969 and began their attempts to mount the control machinery of the FER program. While some reported a quick and smooth adoption of the program, others were frozen out of meaningful participation from the beginning.

As previously stated, the problem existed before FER came about because when national money earmarked for education arrived in the common funds of the states, the nation would lose all control over how that money

was actually used. Through the contracts, the states were obliged to establish separate bank accounts for the national and state contributions to education and the delegados were to have powers of vigilance, intervention, and, in the case of hiring teachers, formal approval.

However, in the majority of the states when the national funds arrived monthly at the state treasury, the state treasurer placed them in a separate bank account as required but did not authorize the delegado access to the accounting. Without such access, the delegado was blind to most of the administrative activities taking place in the state educational system. There was no stable pattern, however, and over the months and years some delegados gained considerable influence over the state educational expenditures and others lost what they had initially. As of June of 1973 over half of the delegados still did not have access to the accounting as required by the contracts.

Also, the illicit procedures the contracts intended to terminate still continued to crop up. For example, one delegado reported:

> It wasn't until 1971 that I was authorized to approve the dispatch of funds from the FER account. Once when I was here prior to that time, some national FER money, to the extent of 6.5 million pesos, was removed from the education account and used for public construction. It was during election time and it produced a huge deficit. Who knows how much more was used. The system wasn't working well enough to prevent this because I wasn't given authority to examine the books.

Some delegados were frozen out of state operations from the beginning. In late 1972 a public research institution reported on four such situations.

> The office of the delegado is located outside the state offices thus making even informal relationships difficult to establish. The participation of the delegado is null in the process of selection and upgrading of teachers, control and execution of

> the budget, coordination of resources, technical and administrative advice or any other activity related to the accomplishment of the obligations inherent in the job.[29]

By Ministry policy, all *delegados* should have the authority to issue final approval over the hiring of teachers; but according to a Ministry official only 11 have acquired that power in practice.[30] "It depends on the governor," he said, "and some governors simply won't permit it. In the 11 cases it is quite possible that a new governor will arrive tomorrow and won't permit it."

Those *delegados* who have the power of approving teacher appointments can use it very effectively. Stated one *delegado*:

> The governors and secretaries of education are very jealous of their prerogatives. They don't want anyone to have anything to do with the actual appointment of new teachers. But the *delegados* have another manner of controlling the hiring without sticking their noses in the governor's prerogatives. I ask that the state send to my office all the appointments they make. It doesn't make any difference to me who appoints them. When the list arrives here, we say that the fund can pay X teachers and 'you Mr. Governor appointed X too many and we cannot pay them.' Because the secretary knows this they don't appoint any more than have been approved in the budget.

A fundamental problem with the *delegado* role is that it is neither a line nor a staff position, but an odd mixture of the two. This feature creates many complications. Blau and Scott define these concepts, saying ". . .line officials possess formal authority, whereas staff members furnish specialized and technical advice to the appropriate line officials in the organizational hierarchy."[31] It is true that the *delegado* has some line-type authority, such as approval of teacher hiring, but it is also true that a governor can usually block the *delegado* from taking action if he so chooses.

In practice, the role of *delegado* is more like a liaison position,

advising the secretary of education and reporting illicit activities back to the Ministry. Also, the limits of the authority the delegados have are not precisely defined. Said one delegado, "What our authority actually is all seems very diffuse. It is based on personal statements from Bogota, traditions, letters, telegrams, and telephone calls. There are also two or three specific decrees on the tasks of the delegado." When a clash over authority comes at the state level, the problem is usually transferred quickly up to the central Ministry officials where the arbitration is carried out.

Hiring by special exam is an important part of the Ministry's desire to upgrade the quality of teachers entering the state school systems. According to the contracts, and its own policy, any state not hiring by special exam will lose its national funding for education. A delegado reported on a common occurrence:

> This year when 150 new state teaching positions were approved, to be paid by the nation, I requested that they be selected by special examination. I sent a telegram to the Minister and the Director General saying that it would be opportune if the National Examination Institute sent people here to give the exam. My reply was 'the only condition for hiring would be that the teachers have diplomas from normal schools.' The political directors of the state then selected the new teachers based on the number of votes they could bring in for the next election. It was like throwing chunks of meat to hungry lions at the zoo.

When questioned about this back at the Ministry of Education, an official replied, "We have wanted to force this special exam on the states, but in the three or four states where it has been used it hasn't turned out well. The selection of teachers wasn't based on the results of the exam because of political pressures."

Finally, some delegados have been successful at their attempts to

get secretaries of education to rehabilitate their administrative operations, while other delegados have felt that this has been the most exasperating task of all. Said one disgruntled delegado:

> Even though the contract says that I can intervene in the organization of the administrative affairs of the state government regarding education, I haven't had a chance to do this. When I talked with them about new ways of operating, they listened and said everything was very good, everything was perfect, everything was magnificent regarding my suggestions, but nothing was ever put into practice. Personally, I get along very well with the state officials. We go to parties together, we drink together, but when we talk about FER, its something else.

In short, the organizational role housing the delegado is fragile, and its ability to function depends heavily on the voluntary cooperation of the state officials, the personal tact of the delegado, and the backing support of the Ministry.

The Administrative Councils

Not long after the contracts were signed, the Ministry used an appendage to the contract to create an administrative council to govern the FER program in each state. On the surface the councils had the appearance of broadening the decision-making process into a more representative instrument, but their latent function was to continue diminishing the firm grip the governors and their secretaries of education maintained over the state educational systems.

Where previously the state officials made their own decisions about the financing and operation of state schools, the administrative councils would place authority over the conduct of the FER programs in the hands of six voting council members: the governor, the secretary of education, the chief of planning, a parent, a teacher, and the delegado.

Decisions on all subjects were to be made by majority vote; but not willing to take any chances, the Ministry included the following statement: "In order to be valid, all agreements of the council require the signature of the Minister or his delegado." In other words, the delegado was given veto power over all actions of the council in his state. Such a council could have been a very constructive instrument had it been accepted in the spirit of furthering educational development, but in practice the state and the Ministry officials tended to view it as an instrument of fiscal control. As a decision-making instrument the council in most of the states has been notably ineffectual; mainly because the governors have recognized it as a device intended to carve away even more of their power. In some states the council was never created, in others it was created but the governor never called meetings, yet in others meetings were called but only to ratify what had already been decided beforehand. One delegado writing to the Ministry in 1972 expressed his frustration at trying to initiate the council's operation:

> Despite the insistence and complaints (I have made), the governors these past years have not assembled (the administrative council) or even recognized the functions that the same state officials have confirmed by decree. As such, the council has always been null. It was born dead.

By its own policy, the Ministry is obliged to cut off national funding to those states which do not form an administrative council. In an interview, one delegado reported on his experience with this policy.

> When I arrived in this job, I found that there was not an administrative council and they didn't want to form one. I sent an urgent telegram to the Minister and a letter to the Director General asking that they suspend the national support to the state. They never answered from Bogota--not one word.

The Ministry has never suspended its support because a state did not put into operation an administrative council, and this is significant because most of the states have never had an operative council.

Sanction and Control

An age-old homily has it that "a rule without penalty is mere advice." The notion of reward and penalty (positive and negative sanction) are fundamental elements in the management process as it seeks to accomplish the goals of the organization. In the FER program individual state governments were to be rewarded by the receipt of national money if they adhered to the requirements of the contractual clauses. By faulting on the clauses, they would be obliged to suffer the consequences of losing national support.

However, in the face of flagrant and repeated violations of the contracts in many of the states, the Ministry has suspended its support only on one occasion (for a period of three weeks in one state). The issue of why the Ministry does not use its ultimate weapon is significant. A Ministry official responded to this issue:

> If the Ministry were to suspend its payments, the state would be unable to pay the teachers and a strike would soon follow. We have had considerable experience with strikes, and we know what usually happens. When the strike comes the teachers gather in the plaza and try to draw in other labor unions and heads of families. The full fury of the strike falls on the Ministry of Education and not the state government. The pressure intensifies and the President finally tells the Ministry to cover the deficit in the state. The teachers get their money from the nation even though state level problems had caused the troubles.

One of the delegados offered a revealing comment related to this issue.

> When the states would not comply with the contract, the Minister would often get mad and talk about suspending the monthly payment to the state, but he never did. You must remember that he is a politician too, and he must work with the governors who are also politicians. The Minister is subject to the same political pressures from the governors that he can use on them.

In an interview with the secretary of education of a state where there has been virtually no collaboration with the FER program, he was asked if he was concerned that the Ministry might cut off its financial support. The secretary matter-of-factly replied, "We don't consider it a threat. The teachers would go on strike and the Ministry doesn't want that." Then does the Ministry really have any mechanism to force compliance?, Ministry officials were queried. "In this case," replied one, "the Ministry has no power of control. For all practical purposes, it has been converted into a voluntary compliance contract. It is left to the governor who wants to comply with the contract to make it work."

In short, the Ministry has not followed the practice of using its power of negative sanction because the fury and rage generated by cutting off national support to a state would fall back on the Ministry. Nor has the Ministry been able to develop what might be called "middle range sanctions." Because the secretaries of education tend to be aspiring politicians and not career educators, there is little that can be done through the traditional organizational practice of control through career management. A secretary of education has no fear of not getting promoted in the educational system because that is certainly not one of his objectives. Thus, in regards to providing organizational control through sanction, the only recourse is virtually an ultimate recourse and its application is considered to be inappropriate.

A Brief Conclusion on the 1969-1973 FER Experience

Even though the FER program has been ridden with difficulties, as is the case with all change oriented programs, most observers agree that the practice of organization and administration of the public primary schools has significantly improved in Colombia since 1968. The number of teacher strikes has been reduced, the states are more responsive to Ministry policy, and irregularities in management have declined considerably. Also, the organizational processes involving authority, communication, personnel, and rule elaboration have notably improved over the pre-reform era. In short, definite progress is being recorded.

It is the writer's judgment that any measure of success that the FER program might enjoy probably cannot be attributed to any powers of control built into the contract. This paper has demonstrated that a governor can override the contract at his pleasure. It is the writer's opinion that what the FER program has done is to wear away at a tradition of administrative independence at the level of state government. Prior to the reform the state leaders tended to look at the Ministry controlling policy in the context of what Alvin Gouldner refers to as "mock rules." That is, "Rules (which) are neither enforced by management nor obeyed by the workers."[32]

Through the FER program the Ministry has succeeded in making a semi-convincing argument that it is now quite serious about fiscal responsibility, administrative efficiency, and disciplined decision-making at the level of state government. The presence of the delegado, his constant reminders of official policy, and attempts to check the state records serves as a daily prodding to state officials. The words "semi-

convincing argument" were used because the state officials are also aware that the Ministry is not yet serious enough to start making the hard decisions about suspending national funds for violations of the contract. To date, this clause still remains in the category of a "mock rule."

Taking advantage of the enthusiasm generated over a new national law on educational finance, the Ministry developed a new set of contracts for the governors to sign.[33] In terms of control, the new contracts are different from the old in one rather curious way--they are weaker.[34] For example, in the original contract 13 delegados were given the power of approval over the hiring of new teachers, and the new contract makes no mention of this. The reason for this de-escalation is attributed to the need to reduce the level of tension between the state officials and the Ministry in regards to FER. It is the Ministry's hope that this approach may create a spirit of understanding and cooperation which, in the long run, may prove to be more effective than direct control procedures.

FER and the Future

The FER program is a transitional device which will probably evolve through planning into a more effective mechanism of educational development. In designing an improved organizational structure, at least two basic issues must be dealt with. First, the state educational leaders must be directly responsible to the Minister of Education and not to an intermediate official such as a governor. Second, the number of educational subsystems must be reduced from 23 to, say, six or eight regional offices. By cutting down on the multiplicity of educational systems, it becomes possible to staff the larger units with qualified, career oriented

educational administrators. It also reduces the problems of coordinating, planning and executing decisions, as well as permits an efficient degree of decentralization related to regional needs.

Most important of all, by expanding the size of the local educational subsystems to dimensions covering two or three states, the local political influence that now dominates the administrative process should be dramatically diminished. In short, if the leaders of the new educational units are employees of the Ministry who report to the Minister, and the boundaries of the system go beyond the boundaries of any single state, it will be extremely difficult for local politicians of any single state to get control of the management of the system.

Dramatic changes such as the two mentioned are more than simply a remote possibility. In recent years the Ministry has been assuming more and more of the cost of state primary school education and the pressure from the states is intense in advocating that the nation pay for all such education. When the nation finally does assume the entire burden, a natural shift in responsibility from the governors to the Ministry can take place. With this shift in responsibility, it will be possible for the Ministry to establish a limited number of regional offices of education to govern the primary and secondary school programs in Colombia.

In closing, it might be appropriate to say that because a reform confronts traditions, vested interests, and established mental attitudes, changes do not summarily follow the drawing of plans and the signing of documents. As the Colombian experience has shown, change comes slowly, but it does indeed come.

FOOTNOTES

1. USAID Mission to Colombia, Colombia: Education Sector Assessment. USAID unpublisned monograph, revised edition, May, 1973, p. 1.

2. DANE, "El Sistema Escolar," Boletín Mensual de Estadística: No. 243. Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, Octubre, 1971, p. 144.

3. La Educación en Colombia 1960-1968; Diagnóstico. Ministerio de Educación Nacional, p. 175.

4. As reported in, Rodolfo Low-Maus, Compendium of the Colombian Educational System. Bogotá, 1971, pp. 114-115.

5. Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, Toward a General Theory of Action. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

6. Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 3.

7. Richard Scott, "Theory of Organizations," in Robert E. L. Faris (ed.), Handbook of Modern Sociology. Chicago: Paul McNally and Co., 1964, p. 488.

8. Chester Barnard, The Functions of the Executive. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938, p. 19.

9. Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957, p. 8.

10. Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations. London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964.

11. Daniel Griffiths, Administrative Theory. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959, p. 73.

12. This part of the study draws on the research conducted in 1969 and is reported in part in: Mark Hanson, "Educational Reform in Colombia and Venezuela: An Organizational Analysis," Occasional Papers in Education and Development, Harvard Graduate School of Education, August, 1970.

13. Yvon Lebot, "Organización y Funcionamiento del Sistema Educativo Colombiano," Boletín Mensual de Estadística; No. 243, op. cit., p. 79.

14. Constitución Política de Colombia, Art., 181.

15. Yvon Lebot, op. cit., p. 80.

16. Censo Educativo Nacional, 1968.

17. Constitución Política de Colombia, Art., 41.

18. For a report on this issue see: Richard R. Renner, Education for a New Colombia. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971, pp. 33-35.

19. USAID, op. cit., p. 104.

20. DANE, op. cit., p. 138.

21. Decreto Número 3157, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Diciembre 26, 1968.

22. Ministerio de Educación, "La Reforma de la Organización Educativa," Serie: Transformación Educativa No. 3, 1969, p. 7.

23. Contrato No. 1, Celebrado Entre el Gobierno Nacional y el Departamento de . . . .

24. The original planning intended to include the secondary schools in the FER program, but thus far no such action has taken place.

25. ICOLPE, Estudio Sobre Fondos Educativos Regionales: Informe Final, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Bogotá, 1973, pp. 21-22.

26. ICOLPE, "Analisis, Comentarios y Conclusiones de los Datos Contenidos en la Encuesta Sobre Descentralización Administrativa--Fondos Educativos Regionales," Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Bogotá, Noviembre 15 de 1970, p. 6.

27. ICOLPE, "Reunión de Secretarios de Educación de la Costa Atlántica, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, unpublished mimeograph, January 7, 1971, pp. 4-5.

28. Richard R. Renner, op. cit., p. 13.

29. ICOLPE, Estudio Sobre Fondos Educativos Regionales: Informe Final, op. cit., p. 22.

30. Decreto 393 de 1970, Ministerio de Educación, gives all the delegados authority to issue final approval over the hiring of teachers.

31. Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach. San Francisco: Chandler, 1962, p. 173.

32. In reality, the situation described here only meets part of Gouldner's definition. See Alvin Gouldner, Pattern of Industrial Bureaucracy. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954, p. 217.

33. El Congreso de Colombia, Ley 46 de 1971 (to take effect in January of 1973); El Presidente de la República de Colombia, Decretos No. 1064 de 1972, 19 de 1973, 20 de 1973.

34. The model of the new contract is, El Presidente de la República, Decreto No. 124 de 1973.

( ) = number of units

____ = line of control

- - - = line of Coordination

1968 Education Census

Figure 1

Lines of Administrative Control